



March 1998



Nebraska Task Force - I

Article

by Elaine Sawtell

Condensed Version Reprinted - Springfield, Missouri - DTC Newsletter 02/96 - Part II

THE CALL - Sunday, April 30, 1995, 5 p.m. "Do you want to fly or drive," asked the FEMA representative on the phone. The stormy weather, Springfield's limited commercial flights and the luxury of having my van made the decision easy. "I'll drive." The five-hour drive through heavy rain passed quickly. Downtown Oklahoma City came into view. The Murrah Federal Building could not be seen, but an eerie glow hung in the fog over the building from the massive banks of lights which lit the scene for night operations. Ditto and I were directed to CA-TF5 Task Force Leader Chuck Nicola. He thanked us for coming. "This is where the day crew sleeps." He cracked open the door to a large room lined with cots and aimed his flashlight to an empty one. In the morning a FEMA van shuttled Ditto and I to the FBI office where we were photographed and each issued photo ID tags, green, denoting access to the inner perimeter and building.

Monday, May 1, 1995 - It was still dark at 5 a.m. when Ditto and I crossed the street to the grounds of the Myriad Botanical Gardens. The rain had ended, and a gentle breeze blew from the south the direction of the Federal Building. Ditto rifled her head and sniffed the air. She turned to me, and I softly said "Good girl," acknowledging her indication. I too could smell the odor of death.

THE ASSIGNMENTS - "They came from California's capitol city to Oklahoma's, toting dogs eager to sniff for warmth in our cold rains." This phrase from an editorial in The Daily Oklahoman said it all. However, at the morning briefing we were advised the mission was now classified as recovery rather than rescue. All hope of finding live victims was officially gone. While recovery of the victims would proceed, safety of the rescuers would be the prime consideration.

Tuesday, May 2, 1995 - In a brief ceremony, CA-TF5, the last FEMA Urban Search & Rescue Task Force, officially returns recovery operations to the Oklahoma City Fire Department. The fire department chaplain assures the team they are not leaving the job unfinished.

Wednesday, May 3, 1995 - CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) CA-TF5 had finished its work at the Murrah Federal Building. An important part of any disaster is preparing task force members for return to their daily lives and families. This day was spent relating to the people of Oklahoma. Ditto and I are

part of a delegation to Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School, that join the entire task force in presenting an orange tree on behalf of Orange County to the Myraid Botanical Gardens and Oklahoma officials.

Thursday, May 4, 1995 - CA-TF5 Task Force Leader Chuck Nicola has offered Ditto's services to the Oklahoma City Fire Department. The offer has been accepted, and this time Ditto and I drive the few blocks to the Federal Building. We wait at a stop light next to a well dressed businessman. He rolls down his window and says simply, "Thank you for coming." The goal now is to end recovery operations by 6 p.m. At 6:30 p.m. the OKC Fire Department Chief of Operations requests that we make one last search in an attempt to locate two victims thought to be in the Credit Union at the time of the blast. If their bodies are in the area suspected, recovery will be impossible until the building is brought down. Heavy machinery is shut down while Ditto makes her final sweep. Her alert is classic. Recovery operations end around midnight. Amazingly, all victims have been recovered or accounted for.

THE CEREMONY - Friday, May 5, 1995. A ceremony is planned at the building limited to rescue workers, allowing them time to pay their final respects. Ditto and I are requested by FEMA to attend on behalf of all FEMA search dogs. A slab of concrete has spontaneously grown into a memorial covered with flowers, flags, children's toys, a pair of baby shoes. Through the night I had tried to think of what we could leave as a tribute from the search dogs. I decided the most appropriate memento would be a search dog's most prized possession, the toy we train with and Ditto's orange field dummy inscribed FEMA USAR DOGS, was laid among the flowers and teddy bears.

The ceremony is brief. Governor and Mrs. Keating pass among the silent crowd handing out red roses. Bagpipes play and prayers are said. At the conclusion, there is silence. Then, as if planned, rescue workers, Red Cross volunteers, heavy equipment operators, FEMA officials, federal, state and local law enforcement and firefighters walk to the yellow tape now barring entrance to the ruins and toss the roses into the spot where for days they had worked so hard. Tears and emotions long kept in check while there was work to be done now flow. Ditto and I turn to walk the The crowd, several deep along the fence begins to applaud. I look around to move out of the way for the object of their appreciation and find it is Ditto, a symbol of all the dogs who have given their best.

*Part II to be cont. in next month's newsletter

Article

Obedience and Your USAR Dog

by Dian Quist Sulek

You should accustom your dog to do ANYTHING, ANYWHERE!
Will your dog eat anywhere? Will your dog relieve himself anywhere?

EATING

If your dog is a finicky eater, withhold his food until you would normally feed him again. When you feed your dog, give him 10-20 minutes to eat.

Canine Bulletin

NETF-I

Published by
Lincoln Fire Department
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If the food is not eaten, take it away and don't give your dog anything to eat until it is time to feed him again. (This means you can't train him with treats until after he has eaten).

After your dog understands that food is to eat and not to play with....start feeding your dog in different areas (kitchen, basement, front & back yard, at the park or playground

Now, those of you gloating because your dog (Labrador) chows down.... better try some different area is stressed, when your dog is stressed, you're stressed.

RELIEVING

Although it is handy to have a certain spot in the yard for your dog to relieve himself, and it is easier to just let the dog out the door you should go out with your dog or walk your dog (with a baggie to pick things up, of course) giving your dog a command and praise when he relieves himself. With boy dogs this is pretty easy, in the liquid area anyway, simply do not let your dog "water" everything in sight, pull him off the tree and walk him to the fire hydrant, giving him a command and praise, etc.

It will be important to keep your dog comfortable so your dog can perform to the best of his ability. Keeping your dog on the same schedule everyday whether at home or away would be ideal , but when deployed you will be working 12 hour shifts, and that could be 8am- 8pm, or midnight to noon, etc.

Eating and relieving can be trained and should be viewed as another exercise, not an option.

Upcoming Training Events

Seattle, WA	(Basic) March 21-22
Indianapolis IN	(Basic and Advanced) April 25-26
Denver, CO	(Basic) May 2-3
Boston, MA	(Advanced) September 26-27
Lincoln, NE	(Basic) October 10-11

There are currently approximately 90 FEMA certified Disaster Search Dogs in the country. Of those 90, approximately 29 are Advanced Teams.

We will train at home on Saturday March 21st, and Sunday March 22nd. This is the schedule for that weekend.

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE THESE ITEMS AVAILABLE TO YOU, PLEASE BRING THEM, OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT WOULD WORK TO HAUL AND SPREAD THE WOOD CHIPS TO THE NEEDED AREAS AT THE TRAINING CENTER.

wheel barrow	cob forks	hammers	grass cans on wheels
socket sets	shovels	5 gal. buckets	heavy duty rakes
utility knives			

Saturday March 21

8:00am	Meet at TC for Work
12:30-1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Alert, Tunnel Crawl, Obedience, Agility

Sunday March 22

9:00am	Meet at Vicky Moser's Farm - Wilderness Alert
12:00pm	Sack Lunch, General Meeting
1:00pm	Obedience, Agility, Directability
3:00pm	Wilderness Alert

NOTE: We will be doing quite a bit of walking/hiking into where we need to train. So please dress appropriately. Have your backpacks packed with everything you will need for the entire day. The training will not be canceled regardless of the weather, so be prepared, rain or shine.

The NETF-1 K-9 training sessions will be the third Saturday of each month at the Lincoln Fire Department Training Center located at 3rd & South Street from 8:00am - 4:00pm. These training sessions are a great time to observe other dog/handler teams, take ADVANTAGE of the NETF-1 trainers expertise, get ideas on what, where and with who you can train in between monthly sessions.

Calender of Canine Training for 1998

April 18	3rd & South/8am	September 19	Outstate in Nebraska
May 16	Outstate in Nebraska	*October 10&11	T.B.A.
June 20	3rd & South/8am	November 21	NETF-1 in Missouri
July 18	NETF-1 in Missouri	*December	NO monthly session
August 15	3rd & South/8am		

Outstate NETF-1 Members in Lincoln = Outstate Members of NETF-1 will be in Lincoln to work their dogs. These members are very knowledgeable some have been deployed, so take advantage of this time to ask questions and get to know them. Observing the more advanced dog/handler teams can also help give you ideas for training your dog.

NETF-1 in Missouri = Members of the Nebraska Task Force are invited to attend the MOTF-1 training session in Columbia, Missouri. HOWEVER, the most advanced dogs will be worked first. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE that you will have the opportunity to work your dog on the Missouri equipment.

TRAINERS - Monica Barger, Alise Dart, Laura Elwess, Melody Jensen, Vicky Moser, and Dian Quist Sulek.

TRAINING LOGS - Training logs must be completed and turned in each month. Your training hours provide important documentation when the Nebraska Task Force (NETF-1) is "audited" by FEMA.

Training Logs Submission Address

Mail or Drop Off Logs to:
Sandy Yost
Lincoln Fire Department
1801 "Q" Street
Lincoln, Ne. 68508

Cancellations

- Due to the snow storm the weekend of March 7th, the Training Center Fix- up Day has been canceled.
- The training in Missouri on March 21-22, has been canceled.